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Vocational Guidance In Youth



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Washington, D.C.,

Printed by Carroll's vocational school,
1922



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JUN 29 1922

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This Brochure is dedicated to
my Father in appreciation of his
Guidance in my youth.

FOREWORD

Twelve years of experience in the field of Industry before entering upon my duties as a Trade Instructor, has given me an insight into the problems that confront those leaving school to enter the work - a-day world.

Daily contact with boys, many of whom social and economic barriers doom to a life of toil with-out adequate preparation, information or counsel, relative to their life's work, prompted me to delve into the Science of Vocational Guidance.

This Brochure was written with local problems and conditions in mind and with the hope that its contents will be helpful to others who are interested in this most vital subject.

My hearty thanks are extended to those who generously gave time and valuable suggestions towards its preparation.

*“Who can declare for what high cause this
Darling of the Gods was born.”*

The establishment of a Vocational Bureau in Boston, Mass., in 1908, was the first organized attempt in the United States to bring into practice a movement that since has become recognized as the most progressive and helpful agency in education launched in a decade. The aims of this Organization were to place before young men and women such advice and information as would aid them in a wise choice as a vocation; to publish and collect books, pamphlets and other literature on industrial, commercial and professional occupations; to carry on correspondence, to give lectures, and interview persons seeking counsel and advice concerning matters of employment and employment adjustment. The funds for the enterprise were furnished by persons inter-

ested in public welfare movements. The educational value of this work was soon recognized by the public school authorities of Boston, and a few years later the Bureau became a part of that public school system.

From the beginning the movement has spread until at present every large city that boasts of progressive public schools has, as a part of its organization, a Department of Vocational Guidance.

Washington, until recently, was among the large cities lacking a well organized Committee or Bureau having as its object the vocational advisement of children in its public schools. In the report of the Assistant Superintendent in charge of Colored Schools to the Superintendent, July 1915, he stressed the point that "The need of organized vocational guidance calls for executive action." His selection of a Central Committee on Vocational Guidance in

February 1919, further evidenced his profound interest in the subject and his knowledge of the moral, civic and economic significance of this movement.

The selection by this Committee of a "Vocational Counselor" for each of the buildings in the 10th, 11th, 12th and 13th Divisions was a most important movement, and the individual efforts of these Counselors will prove of lasting value to such pupils who are fortunate to come under their observation.

Previous to the establishment of this Committee on Vocational Guidance, many and various efforts have been made in the elementary and high schools, to bring into practice a wise vocational guidance of children and youth. It was felt that the time had come when these scattered efforts, at least in respect to pupils advancing from the elementary to the high schools or the vocational schools, should be def-

nitely organized. Thus the schools of Washington became identified in an organized way with the Vocational Guidance Movement.

"Vocational Guidance is bound up first with educational problems, and second with economic questions."

Authorities on the subject are not so much concerned with what Vocational Guidance is, as, to what it attempts to do. It has been well agreed that its aims are to give helpful advice to persons in choosing, preparing for, entering into and making progress in occupations. This is attempted by giving occupational information about commerce and industry, and educational information relative to courses of study, schools and colleges best fitted to provide instruction for their chosen life's work. Again it would assist in making opportunities for one to discover his vocational bent, placement, and give such help as would enable him to make pro-

gress in his chosen field.

"To work is the heritage of the masses." The schools are concerned with the masses.— The function of the schools is to prepare the masses to enter the work-a-day world equipped with such mental and physical abilities that will enable them to adjust themselves to the many perplexing problems that will confront them in the fields of industry. This the schools in the fullest sense have failed to do.

Until the establishment of vocational and trade schools no formal effort had been made to prepare boys and girls to meet the demands of industry in an efficient manner. Statistics of school leaving have proven that industry swallows up a vast army of children each year and moulds them into a making to suit its own needs. The establishment of apprenticeship, vestibules and other types of schools in factories and merchantile establishments is evidence

of the desire of industry and commerce for more intelligent workers. The introduction of vocational and trade schools was an attempt to supply the demand for efficient workers in industry and commerce. Considering there are more than three thousand separate and distinct occupations and that few if any schools exist where an attempt is made to give instruction in more than twenty, because of lack of facilities, space, cost of equipment and maintainance, it is obvious that some other scheme must be devised to acquaint boys and girls with an estimate of their abilities; further to give such occupational information as will enable them to capitalize their talents in such manner as to make them more efficient workers and render greater service to society.

This is one of the problems of Vocational Guidance. Its value from an educational standpoint is that it opens the eyes of the pupil to the work of the

world, helps him to find his place in it, aids in preparing him to enter it, and assists him in making progress in his chosen field. Its moral value is in so doing this, his future status as a good citizen is secured. From an economic point it enables him to enter adult life equipped with keen tools and sharpened wits to earn his livelihood.

Since Vocational Guidance concerns itself chiefly with young people found in the public schools, and since its efforts and results are closely related to the economic welfare of the community, it is advisable that the undertaking should be a part of or closely related to the public school system. This would enable such a department to coordinate its activities with that of the attendance and work certification offices, with the department of mental and physical measurement, school census, with those conducting classes in occupations and engaged in developing means for sup-

plying school children with vocational information, and with the output of the vocational schools.

The machinery necessary for carrying on such work is generally supervised by a central or advisory committee, a special department or bureau of vocational guidance and a staff of counselors.

The central or advisory committee should be composed of school officers, members of parent-teacher associations, and representatives of civic, commercial and industrial organizations whose assistance and advice would be valuable in planning vocational guidance activities and vocational courses of study to fit the community, helpful in gathering occupational information, and of valuable assistance when attempting to make placements.

The Department of Vocational Guidance should be directed by one who has specialized in the Science of Voca-

tional Guidance, possessing an industrial as well as an academic point of view. It should be actively engaged in the gathering of occupational and educational information of particular interest and value to the community and prepare such information for use to teacher, pupil and parent. It should assist in preparing courses of study in occupations and it should be a source of information for teachers conducting classes. In lieu of some other agency it should have charge of the school census and have file cards bearing the names, ages, grades and other specific information concerning children in the schools above the fifth grade. It should send out literature and vocational information to the Counselors and keep them well informed concerning the vocational opportunities and requirements of the community. It should be the medium for bringing the pupil, the parent, and the advisor together for the purpose of dis-

cussing and planning the child's immediate vocational future or for arranging its educational program.

The Counselors should interview pupils brought to their notice for such reasons as intent to leave school to go to work, change of schools, leaving school because of economic necessity, arriving at the age when the law releases them from being compelled to continue, about to enter a vocational school, and at such other critical times as enter the life of the pupil. Case methods should be applied in order to find out the social life of the child and arrange conferences with the parent to obtain intimate knowledge of his environment, interests, talents and personal data regarding his problems. They should be familiar with and make use of mental and vocational tests to determine, (first) forms of intelligence, (second) to detect subnormal or abnormal children, (third) to select unusually

bright children for special observation and instruction, (fourth) to make a tentative beginning of the guidance of the vocational choice of children among labor, trades and professions.

Vocational Guidance should be provided before, during and after courses in vocational education if these courses are to be truly effective.

Students in vocational courses should be enrolled only after careful selection on the basis of fitness and well considered choice.

Courses of study in "Occupational Problems and Opportunities" in the grades above the fifth and the establishment of "Life Career" classes in the Junior and Senior High Schools, are necessary activities of the schools for carrying on the work of an efficient Department of Vocational Guidance.

All children above the fifth grade should be given specific information concerning the various occupations

carried on by persons in the industrial, commercial and professional world for economic gain. This can best be given by arranging special courses of study rather than attempting to give it in connection with lessons in English, Geography and other studies as is often done. The subject matter should be chosen with local needs and opportunities in mind, but broad and general enough to give the pupil a knowledge of the occupational world with the civil, moral and economic point of view ever before him.

Pupils of the Junior High School who finish the ninth grade are confronted with the problems of choosing between the academic course, the business course, the secondary vocational or the technical department of the high schools. A "Life Career" class would be the solution of that problem which in all probability is the most important decision a child would have to make

in his whole school career.

The "Life Career" classes in the Junior and Senior High Schools should embrace studies that tend to widen the students' experience, aid in discovering and developing their talents, interests and abilities, that teach the relation of education to their vocational life and such studies that enable them to plan and prepare for their life's work.

Subjects of interest and concern to students in such classes are those of labor organizations, government control of industry, collective bargaining, scientific management, employment management, time studies, job analysis, labor turnover, wages, industrial rehabilitation, closed shop, open shop, profit sharing, bonus giving, and other cooperative schemes. These are vital questions of the day that every worker must know.

In setting up a practice of Vocational Guidance, the field in which it is to

work must be surveyed to determine what the community offers the youth and adult for gaining educational advantages and economic independence.

At a glance one is disposed to feel that Washington has a wealth of institutions for the educational advancement of its Colored youth.

A more critical glance at the occupational opportunities, discloses the fact that they are less fortunate in this respect.

✓ Due to the limited avenues of work that are opened to the Colored youth of Washington, the choice of an occupation should be given serious consideration. The preparation for such work should be carried out with great zeal in order to meet and combat conditions over which they have no control.

For the Colored youth who leaves school at an early age, or one who has graduated without taking into account his unfitness for some specific occupa-

tion, he finds the positions offered him in the various government departments paying a small salary and few if any chances for advancement. On the other hand he finds a number of the "street trades" open to him with the attendant small return for his labors and the ever present bad influences that surround such work. When age and size permit he is offered such jobs as drivers, jumpers on delivery wagons, boot blacks, elevator operators, porters, waiters, buss boys, chauffeurs, dishwashers, pressers, cleaners and dyers, gardeners, tub men in laundries, firemen, workers in packing houses and markets, hucksters, butlers, footmen, attendants in banks, janitors, firemen, watchmen, handlers in auction houses, porters in terminal stations, street railway track workers, teamsters and the whole geuntlet of unskilled occupations carried on in the building industry and in the streets.

To a proportion of the girls who

finish the Normal School, Washington offers positions in its public school system. For those who are able to pass such examinations as are prescribed, certain positions in its government departments and bureaus are obtainable. A number of Colored business houses, insurance companies, real estate firms, law offices and financial institutions offer them stenographic and clerical positions. The needle trades are carried on extensively in dress making establishments, millinery shops, tailor shops and private dwellings. Hair dressing shops and beauty parlors enroll students and employ apprentices who find a profitable field for their work when they have completed the course.

For the girls who leave school at an early age to seek employment, the field is limited to such occupations as attendants in physicians' offices, dental offices, switch board operators, elevator operators, maids in hotels, clubs, the-

aters, stores and private homes, manicurists in barber shops, cooks, dusters and stock carriers in department stores, workers in laundries, cleaning and dyeing establishments, waitresses in tea rooms and cafeterias, charwomen, caretakers, employment in box, overall and apron factories, car cleaners around terminals and street railway barns and all manner of domestic service.

For those who have had the good fortune to have chosen their life's work and prepared for it, Washington and the country at large offer unbound opportunities and compensation for services rendered.

The youth who chooses a professional career, prepares for it, enters upon it and makes progress, is assured of his social standing and economic independence. The same may apply should he choose an industrial, agricultural or commercial career. The all important problem for the youth is to choose and

begin to prepare for his career at that time in life when conditions are such as will enable him to carry out his purpose. It is at this point in the child's school life that Vocational Guidance is of inestimable value.

The lessons in occupations tend to open the pupils eyes to the work of the world and the problems which will confront them upon entry into it. At a certain age, every youth has in his mind some kind of worker he would like to be. The lessons in occupations teach him the tasks he would have to do, the advantages and disadvantages of such an occupation, how he might prepare for this calling, the wages he might expect, its value to society, his chances for advancement and how such work would effect his social status. Undoubtedly such information when given, sets the child to thinking and his choice will change as he goes further into the subject, until the thought of any one line

of work is lost, because of the interest in the subject of occupations in general.

By the time he reaches the Junior High School, he has a comprehensive knowledge of the world's work and may make special studies of a number of occupations under conditions that will permit him to "try out" such as he has given consideration, for the specific purpose of making at least a tentative choice of his life's work.

The special advantages to be derived by the Colored youth of Washington from the teaching of occupations and the establishment of "Life Career" classes, will come in his being made acquainted with great strides made recently by Negroes here in the District along commercial and industrial lines.

In the establishment of banks, the forming of cooperative stores, real estate development companies, amusement enterprises, moving picture corporations, apartment, hotel, business

and theater building projects, insurance investments, printing establishments, stock companies financed by men of color for the benefit and in the interest of the Race, opens an entirely new field of labor for the Colored youth of the District.

The full development of such enterprises means that avenues of employment will be open to them which heretofore have been closed, and the knowledge of such employment should be taught in the schools in a specific rather than a general manner that they may know of these opportunities and prepare for them.

Vocational Education in the Colored schools is undertaken in (first) two Pre-vocational schools, (second) one Normal school, (third) one Business High School, (fourth) one Manual Training High School. None of these Vocational Centers so far as is generally known, save the Normal School has effected a

definite, positive and systematic relationship with the vocations of the community. The vocational program of the Manual Training High School is being worked out to correct this evil along a number of lines. A Business High School divorced from connection with the Academic High School will stimulate its activities in a like manner.

In the further establishment of Pre-vocational Activities in the Junior High Schools the various "try out" courses offered will no doubt be established with the purpose in mind of having a diversified number of "short unit" courses conducted in an intensive manner, the same being selected because of their value to society. Pupils following these courses would be followed up with a system of cumulative record cards showing in a brief but specific manner their interest, abilities and fitness for such work.

Data of this kind would be valu-

able reference material concerning the pupils for the Officials in charge of such schools. It could find its way into the hands of counselors and advisors and be a gauge in advising the child vocationally.

With the enactment of adequate compulsory school attendance laws, school census legislation along with the development of continuation schools, a Department of Vocational Guidance would be of material assistance in carrying out these provisions.

The proposed legislation is in keeping with other progressive educational movements and means the necessary attendance in school of thousands of children who otherwise at the age of fourteen and fifteen would drop out to seek work. Compelling these children to continue school, without some agency to assist them in a wise choice of a vocation when they are finally released, would indeed be denying them the one

thing that would make school going less distasteful—that is, supplying an incentive for school attendance. Compelling children to stay in school after a certain age without an incentive is deadening and productive of little good considering per capita cost for educating them.

It is safe to say that no system of continuation schools however highly organized could function properly with the field from which it obtains its pupils without some system of Vocational Guidance as a part of its program.

Washington has a wealth of agencies where literature and information may be obtained on matters concerning the subject of Vocational Guidance and the study of "Occupational Problems and Opportunities."

The Federal Board for Vocational Education, furnishes a number of experts on vocational advisement and placement, and a vast amount of litera-

ture concerning such subjects. The Bureau of Education offers facilities for reference, research and investigation. The National Research Council supplies information and welcomes conferences on all matters pertaining to the Movement. The American Federation of Labor is a source of supply from which questions concerning labor and labor organizations may be obtained. The Bureau of Conciliation in the Department of Labor is a clearing house for the occupational problems and opportunities for the Negro. The Congressional Library and the Carnegie Library's shelves contain books, pamphlets and current literature on the subject. The Census Bureau will soon release its valuable data on occupations as it specifically concerns Colored workers. The Junior Division of the United States Employment Service has worked out tentative courses of study on occupations for use in elementary, junior and

senior high schools, normal schools and colleges; attempts placement and employment supervision for minors. The Young Men's Christian Association offers an extension course from Columbia University to ex-service men, teachers and others interested in the subject. The Rotary Club has a program of Vocational Guidance as part of its activities and a number of private schools and organizations have recently evinced great interest in the subject.

While Vocational Guidance tends to do the practical thing for the youth in the schools, it does not fail to attempt the ideal.

The discriminating teacher who is endowed with that uncanny faculty of recognizing the spark of genius in children, is compelled time after time to relinquish the fond hope that the child will some day blossom into an artist, a great singer or some other gifted person, because of the limited time the pu-

pil comes under her observation. The special teachers of drawing and music have in their charge boys and girls who undoubtedly show rare qualities of abilities along these lines.

There can be no doubt of the artistic tendencies of the Negro; which have already found notable expressions in Poetry, Music and the Fine Arts to the point of unusual achievement.

In the first faint glimpse of human civilization we see the African already highly artistic, bringing from the land of Punt a culture that flowers on the banks of the Nile into the most sublime examples of Sculpture and Architecture. Throughout the centuries we find the impulse crushed for a time, but at length it bursts forth, now into an "Alhambra," a Dunbar, a Coleridge Taylor and a Tanner. Our whole race history bequeathes to us such a rich emotional inheritance that many have prophesied that from the Negro race must spring

the artistic genius of America. Already we have to a certain degree fulfilled that prophecy in poetry and music.

A Department of Vocational Guidance would ever be watchful for our boys and girls who possess talents above the average, inform parents of their children's rare endowment, encourage them to develop and cultivate these tendencies and thereby save for the Race numbers of boys and girls who might otherwise lead mediocre lives.

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